

Advancing sustainable resource management through community engagement in Eastern Partnership Countries

Armenia, Georgia, Moldova & Ukraine

Georgia Ecotourism Development Plans

From Strategic Assessment to Practical Implementation

Regional Workshop – Valencia July 2026



sustainable development
on our finite planet



EU4Environment
Green Economy in Eastern Partner Countries

Advancing sustainable resource management through community engagement in Eastern Partnership Countries

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Why Ecotourism Planning Matters in Georgia

Ecotourism Planning in Georgia

Georgia possesses highly diverse natural and cultural landscapes with strong potential for sustainable ecotourism development.

At the same time, increasing tourism pressure creates a need for:

- Integrated planning,
- Environmental safeguards,
- Stronger involvement of local communities.

Ecotourism provides an opportunity to:

- Diversify local livelihoods,
- Support sustainable resource management,
- Strengthen conservation-oriented economic development.



Project framework and Objectives

The Ecotourism Development Plans were prepared under the EU4Environment Programme,

Result Area 4: Ecosystem Services and Livelihoods.



Objectives



Strengthen sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems.



Support local economic development through ecotourism and diversification of livelihoods.

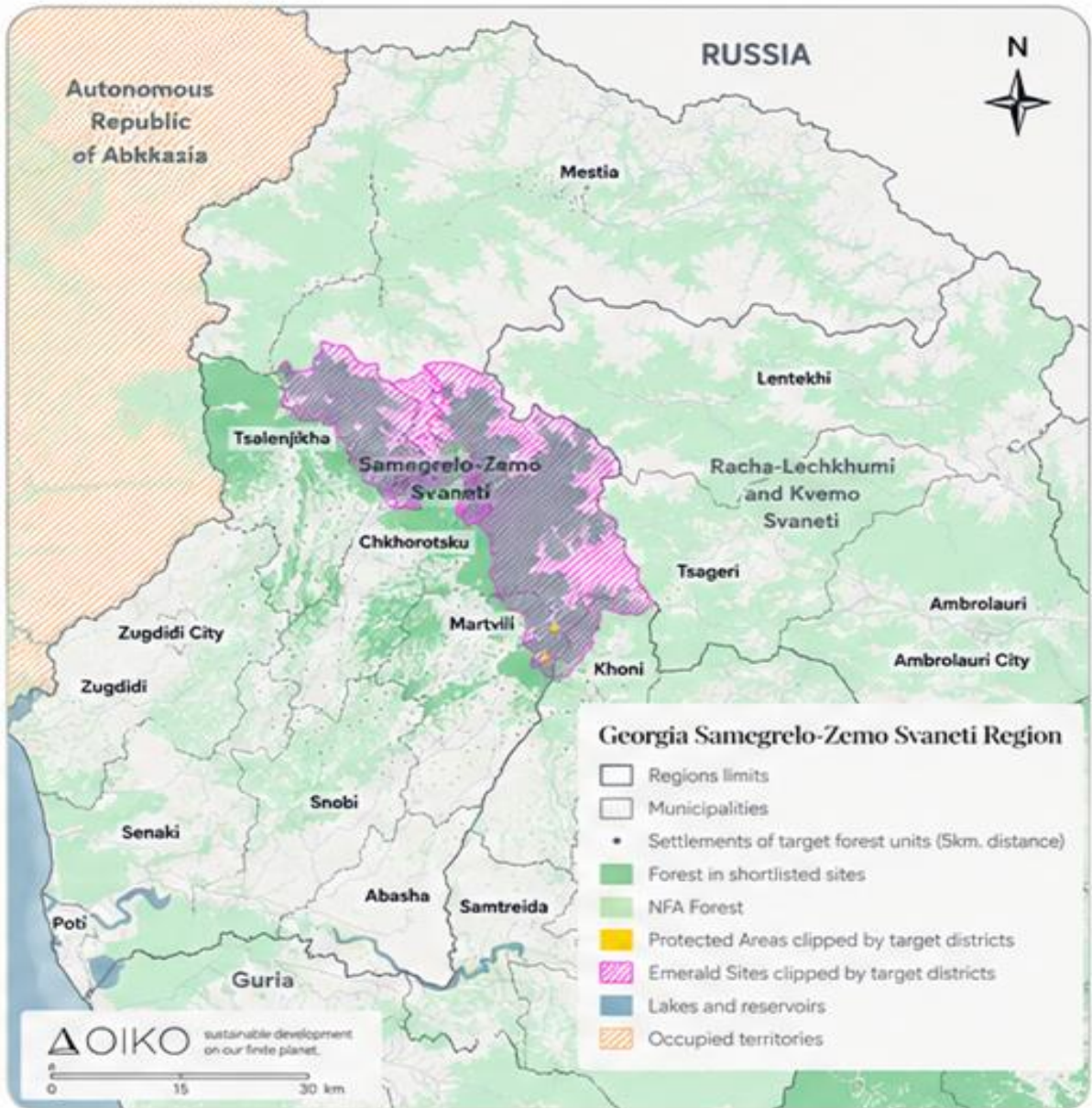
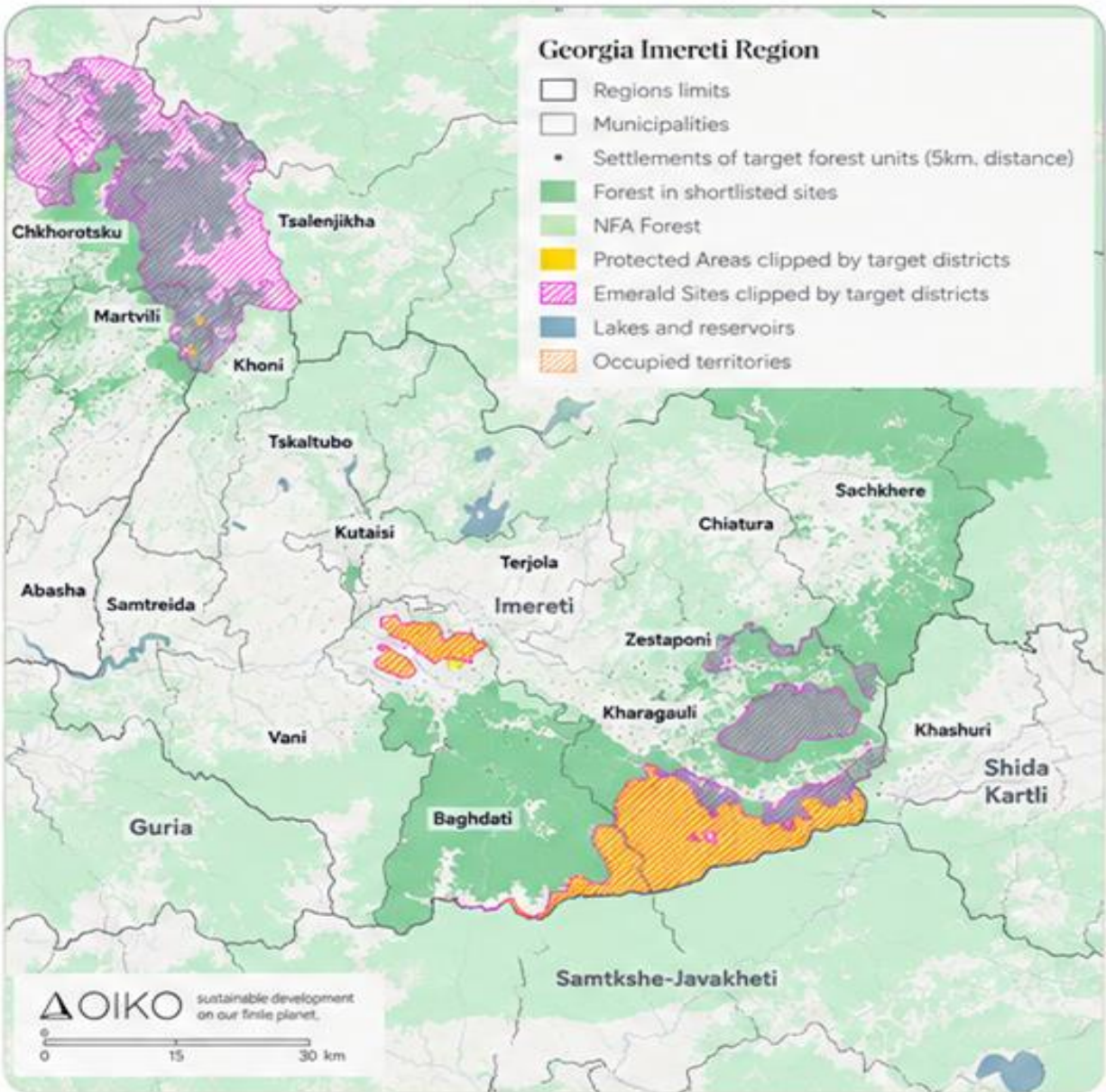


Enhance community engagement and local participation in planning and decision-making.



Integrate environmental safeguards and biodiversity considerations into tourism development.

Selected Areas



8

Municipalities

with diverse natural and cultural assets



2

Regions

Imereti & Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti



1

Integrated Planning Approach

Community-based, evidence-driven



Sustainable Outcomes

Nature conservation, local livelihoods, responsible tourism

Integrated planning approach

Our planning methodology combined technical analysis with participatory engagement to develop practical and sustainable ecotourism plans tailored to each municipality.

▶ 6 Action Planning

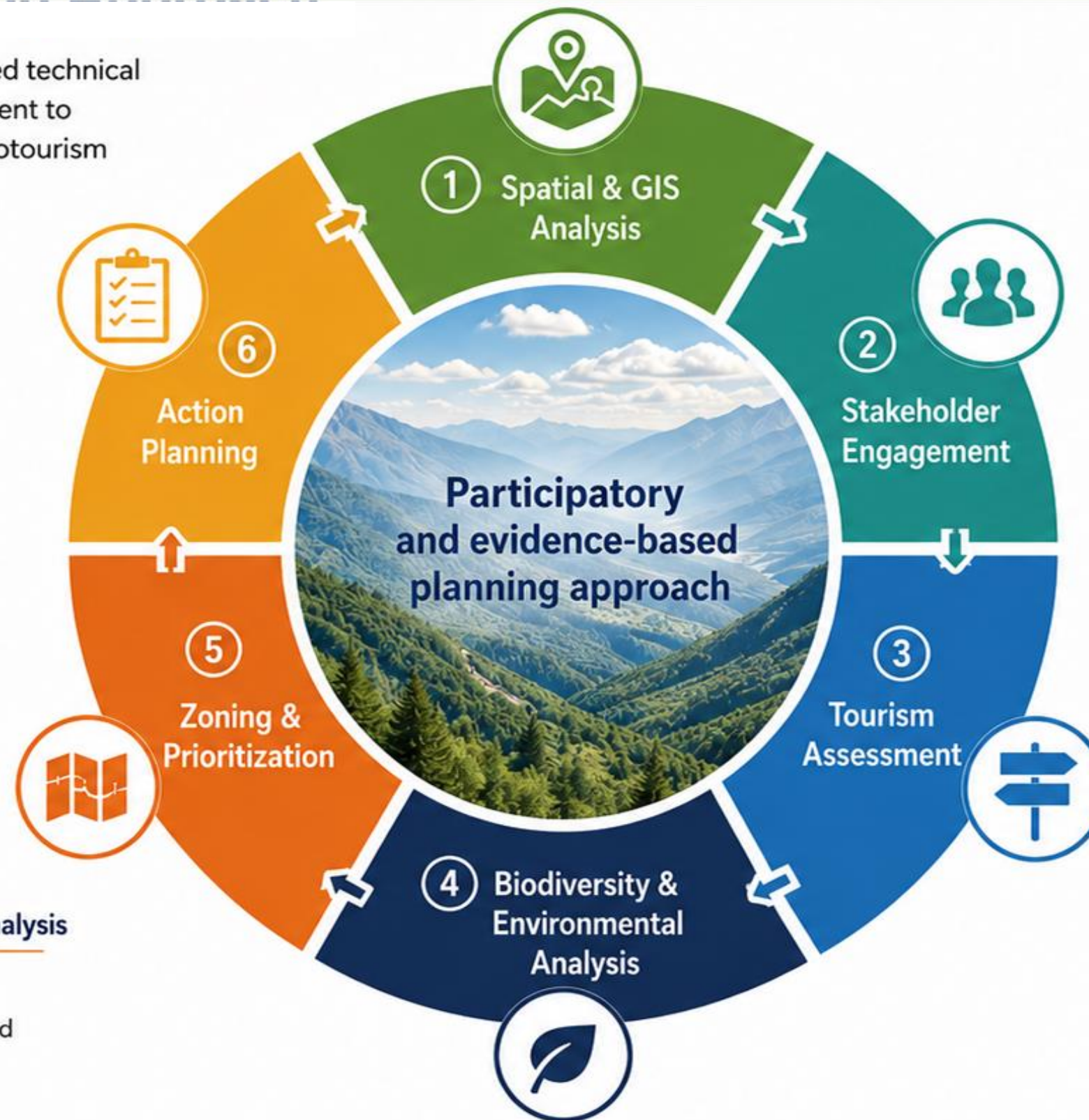
- Development of phased action plans
- Identification of priority projects
- Implementation framework and next steps

▶ 5 Zoning & Prioritization

- Identification of ecotourism potential zones
- Environmental sensitivity considerations
- Prioritization of development areas and activities

▶ 4 Biodiversity & Environmental Analysis

- Assessment of biodiversity values
- Identification of protected areas and ecological corridors
- Environmental risks and carrying capacity analysis



◀ 1 Spatial & GIS Analysis

- Mapping of natural, cultural and tourism assets
- Analysis of accessibility and infrastructure
- Identification of key constraints and opportunities

◀ 2 Stakeholder Engagement

- Consultations with local communities, authorities and key stakeholders
- Focus group discussions and workshops
- Integration of local knowledge and priorities

◀ 3 Tourism Assessment

- Inventory of existing tourism products and services
- Assessment of visitor flows and seasonality
- Analysis of infrastructure gaps and market potential



Outcome: Practical, sustainable and community-centered ecotourism development plans

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder consultations and focus group discussions were conducted in all municipalities involving a wide range of local actors:

Who we engaged

- Municipal authorities;
- National Forestry Agency representatives;
- Destination Management Organizations;
- Tourism operators and guides;
- Community representatives and local entrepreneurs.

Key Outcomes

- Identification of development priorities;
- Better understanding of infrastructure needs;
- Stronger local ownership of planning processes;
- Integration of local knowledge into planning.





SPATIAL ANALYSIS & GIS

Spatial analysis played a central role in identifying ecotourism potential and planning priorities.

The analysis included:

- tourism attractions
- trekking routes
- forest landscapes
- rivers and wetlands
- biodiversity-sensitive areas
- Emerald Network sites
- access infrastructure
- and development pressure zones

GIS mapping enabled integration of tourism development with environmental sustainability principles.

ECO-TOURISM ZONES IN BAGHDATI MUNICIPALITY

- Settlement
 - Peak
 - Viewpoint
 - Water Object
 - Cultural Heritage
 - Protected Areas Infrastructure
 - Architectural and Archaeological Sites
- River; Reservoir; Lake
 - Emerald Network
 - Protected Areas
 - Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs)
 - Forest District
- Eco-Tourism Zones**
- Zone 1 - Khani
 - Zone 2 - Sairme
 - Zone 3 - Zekari
 - Tourist Trail
 - Road
 - Trail



PLANNED ACTIONS IN TSALENJIKHA MUNICIPALITY

- Emerald Network
 - Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs)
 - River; Reservoir; Lake
 - Forest District
- Eco-Tourist Zones**
- Zone 1
 - Zone 2
- Planned Trails**
- Instra Waterfall Trail - Tobavarchkhili Lake
 - Kernakhora - Tobavarchkhili Lake
 - Khoko - Tobavarchkhili
 - Skuri - Tobavarchkhili Lake
- Points along the planned route
 - Settlement
 - Peak
 - Water Object
 - Viewpoint
 - Cultural Heritage
 - Architectural and Archaeological Sites



DIVERSE DESTINATIONS – STRONG ECOTOURISM POTENTIAL



Tsalenjikha
Mountain trekking system



Martvili
Canyon & protecting landscapes



Chkhorotsku
Waterfalls, caves and lakes



Baghdati
Agro-ecotourism and mountain resorts



Vani
Archaeological & cultural landscapes



Kutaisi
Urban forest rehabilitation



Sachkhere
Authentic villages and traditions



Kharagauli
Forest and mountain tourism



Evidence-based planning for sustainable ecotourism



Integration of nature, people and infrastructure



Protection of biodiversity and sensitive ecosystems



Balanced tourism growth and local development



Stronger resilience and long-term value





KEY CHALLENGES

Common Challenges Across Municipalities

MAIN CHALLENGES



Limited tourism infrastructure

Insufficient accommodation, visitor facilities, and supporting infrastructure in key destinations.



Weak visitor orientation systems

Lack of information centers, signage, maps, and wayfinding reduces visitor experience and safety.



Poor trail and road conditions

Many access roads and trails are in poor condition, limiting accessibility and increasing risks.



Limited local tourism services

Shortage of trained staff, quality services, and local products reduces tourism value and economic benefits.



Environmental degradation risks

Unregulated activities, waste, and habitat degradation threaten natural and cultural heritage.



Wildfire vulnerability

Forest fires are increasing due to climate change, unmanaged land use, and limited prevention capacity.



Limited destination management capacity

Municipalities face challenges in planning, coordination, monitoring, and securing sustainable tourism funding.



Build essential tourism infrastructure



Improve signage and visitor orientation



Upgrade roads and trails



Strengthen local tourism services



Protect nature and reduce environmental impacts



Improve wildfire prevention and preparedness



Enhance destination management capacity



Sustainable tourism requires both infrastructure improvement and environmental management.



Development priorities

Priority Development Directions

Infrastructure

- Trail rehabilitation;
- Visitor facilities;
- Signage systems;
- Access improvements.

Community & Economy

- Agro-tourism;
- Local tourism services;
- Capacity building;
- Small business opportunities.

Sustainability

- Biodiversity safeguards;
- Visitor management;
- Low-impact tourism;
- Forest landscape protection.



Governance

- Stakeholder coordination;
- Institutional cooperation;
- Phased implementation planning.



IMPLEMENTATION LOGIC

From Planning to Implementation



SHORT-TERM

0 – 1 YEAR



Trail rehabilitation

Improve and maintain existing trails for safety and accessibility.



Signage systems

Install clear and consistent signage to enhance visitor experience.



Stakeholder coordination mechanisms

Establish platforms for collaboration and information sharing.



MEDIUM-TERM

1 – 3 YEARS



Visitor infrastructure

Develop facilities and services that support visitor comfort and safety.



Tourism diversification

Promote a variety of tourism products across seasons and interests.



Destination branding initiatives

Build a strong and distinctive identity to attract responsible visitors.



LONG-TERM

3+ YEARS



Integrated destination management

Implement coordinated management for sustainable development.



Sustainable financing opportunities

Mobilize funding sources to ensure long-term sustainability.



Regional tourism integration

Strengthen connections and partnerships across destinations and regions.

LESSONS LEARNED

01



Community engagement strengthens ownership

Involving local communities in planning and decision-making builds trust, encourages participation, and ensures long-term stewardship of tourism resources.



02



Spatial analysis improves planning quality

Data-driven mapping and spatial insights help identify opportunities, manage risks, and allocate resources more effectively.



03



Ecotourism supports sustainable livelihoods

Well-managed ecotourism creates economic opportunities, diversifies income sources, and enhances the well-being of local communities.



04



Environmental safeguards must be integrated early

Assessing and addressing environmental impacts from the outset protects ecosystems, reduces future costs, and ensures tourism remains sustainable.



05



Cross-sector cooperation is essential

Strong collaboration among government, private sector, communities, and NGOs leads to integrated solutions and greater impact.



These lessons guide us toward a resilient, inclusive, and nature-positive tourism future.



Thank you for your attention



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